

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: April 15, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 740

Angela Tomberlin

Self

Hutto, TX

I support this bill and request you pass it to allow ranked choice voting, particularly for military and citizens overseas. This would improve the process significantly.

Victoria Hanson

self - retired

Corpus Christi, TX

Vote No on HB 740

I don't like anything about this bill. Not only would this bill cause mass confusion at the time of voting, but a voter would be forced to choose a runoff candidate at the time of their initial vote. This is quite ridiculous considering all the variables that can occur. This bill would also provide for separate voting practices between mail-in and in-person voting. No. No. No.

Samuel Padgett

Self

New Braunfels, TX

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sam Padgett, I am a USMC Vet and a LE Officer. Please consider adopting ranked choice voting as a method for military members to have a greater voice in our elections, speeding up and increasing their participation. Ranked choice voting is a proven method in other States and would greatly improve confidence in our democratic processes. Thank you for taking the time to read my opinion.

Diane Duesterhoeft

self - librarian

San Antonio, TX

I support HB 740 and encourage a vote in favor for the following reasons: Sending one mailing eliminates potential delay in receiving the runoff ballot in time. An instant runoff ballot allows military voters to indicate a second or third choice in case the first choice drops out prior to election day, preventing a wasted vote. A single mailing saves taxpayer dollars. The instant runoff ballot ensures that participation does not drop off between the general election and the runoff. Instant runoff voting for military and overseas voters can be implemented by a legislative change to the Texas Election Code.

Ricardo Rosales Zuniga

self

Austin, TX

The election/runoff process does not run smoothly for overseas voters. Decreasing the number of elections by eliminating runoffs as a benefit of Ranked Choice Voting would help. Election administrators' jobs would be easier if they only had to send out one round of ballots to voters subject to the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Since the current 45-day timeline required before a runoff can be held in Texas still isn't guaranteed to solve the delay in delivery problem, sending one ballot before the first election allows more time for voters to cast a ballot and, even if a ballot doesn't get it back in time for the first round, it still will have been returned in time for the runoff.

Brandon De Loa

SELF / enlisted air force

Corpus Christi, TX

To whom it may concern, My name is Brandon de Loa. I am a native Texas resident from Corpus Christi, Texas. I have served this country honorably for the past years, and while I love the country that America has become, I respectfully need to criticize the way elections are ran and how elected officials come to be. Bipartisan elections are in direct contrast with the ideals this country's election system was founded on. You see we find that the leaders of establishing this new country knew that several ideas are to be thrown around in order to break new ground on hard hitting subjects - Madison and Jackson on the idea of a national bank for instance. These melting pots of discussion, these debates, formed individuality in opinions. These debates proved that no one person has the perfect platform that everyone can agree on. So ask this, why do we as voters need to pick just two platforms of ideas? What about that individual who doesn't fit the box? Are we supposed to conform? I please ask that we reflect on the debates in history that chiseled this beautiful land we call home and the gentleman that participated, and wonder what they would think of having to conform to two parties. Thank you for the time. Respectfully, Mr. De Loa.

Mark Berry

CEO, Software Consulting

Dallas, TX

Please vote YES on preferential voting. Clean up the vote!

Samuel Abels

Self sr. network engineer

Porter, TX

Ranked Choice Voting for Military/Overseas Voters

Background: In 2018, there were approximately 45,000 registered voters in Texas who were either active military personnel, their families, or overseas residents. Both the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) in 1986 and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) which amended it in 2009 were designed to preserve the right to vote for military and overseas voters. In order to comply with these laws, the state of Texas mails ballots to these voters at least 45 days before any election.

Problem: While Texas now fully complies with Federal ballot timeline requirements, the process is still not smooth. Being able to cover both the initial election and any potential runoff in a single mailing to UOCAVA voters would be a considerable improvement.

There are several problems with the current system:

1. Military/overseas voters do not always receive runoff ballots in a timely manner due to delivery delays and those ballots don't necessarily get back to Texas in time to be counted. While these voters represent just 0.3% of both registered and voting Texans, this is an important group of voters who should be protected.
2. Just as others who vote early in person or by mail have experienced, military/overseas voters may vote for candidates who drop out before election day, as happened in the Democratic primary in 2020.
3. Mailing a second ballot for a runoff is expensive and the return rate is very low, which is not a good use of taxpayer money.

Solution: Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana have addressed this problem of potential disenfranchisement of military and overseas voters by adopting the use of instant runoff voting for them. Two ballots are included in the initial mailing to each voter. One is a standard ballot where a single choice for each position should be marked. The second ballot is an instant runoff ballot that allows the voter to rank their choices. Both ballots are returned in a single envelope. The second ballot is only opened in the event of a runoff. Instant runoff voting solves several problems.

1. Sending one mailing eliminates potential delay in receiving the runoff ballot in time.
2. An instant runoff ballot allows military voters to indicate a second or third choice in case the first choice drops out prior to election day, preventing a wasted vote.
3. A single mailing saves taxpayer dollars.
4. The instant runoff ballot ensures that participation does not drop off between the general election and the runoff.

Instant runoff voting for military and overseas voters can be implemented by a legislative change to the Texas Election Code.

Jay Friedman

self

Plano, TX

Using instant run-off for military and overseas voters has been successfully adopted by Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana as a way to allow these voters to pick the candidate they feel best represents them without fearing their vote could be wasted, without these votes needing to be recast in a runoff (costly and disenfranchising,) and without confusion.

We have many issues facing our great state today, but few are no-brainers. This is a no-brainer, as it's bi-partisan, cost-saving, and good for our citizens AND politicians. Please support getting this on the floor for a vote, and vote to approve this bill.

Brian Dorfman

Self, Behavior Therapist

Austin, TX

Preferential voting would be a massive increase in the quality of our elections, and this is a great first step for making sure that all of our citizens can access the vote equally.

Michael Brand, LT

self - US Navy Officer

Frisco, TX

It is often the case where runoff elections are concerned that those most deserving of the right to vote, guaranteed by the democracy we defend, are unable to do so. The reason is not moral, nor legal, but rather logistical.

For service members abroad to participate in runoff elections, the service member must: request that the ballot be sent, receive the ballot and fill it out, and returned the ballot in time to be delivered to the election commission. All of this must be accomplished in the time-span between when the need for a runoff election is announced and the deadline for mail-in runoff ballots to be received, but the time necessary to complete these tasks varies based upon where the service member is stationed and the reliability and expediency of international mail to and from those areas. Even where it is possible to make that deadline, it may be necessary to begin the process the same day that the runoff election is announced. Any delay could result in the ballot being delivered too late to be counted.

It is a shame that so many of my fellow service members are often unable to participate in the last, and arguably the most important, leg of the democratic process. If there were a legal or moral reason for this deficiency, then that would be acceptable, but there is none. The reason is logistical and it is solvable. Preferential voting ballots will render the arduous and unreliable process of requesting mail-in runoff ballots unnecessary.

Richard Howe

self, retired

Plano, TX

I am a native Texan and lifelong conservative. I support this bill to enable rank choice voting. The election/runoff process does not run smoothly for overseas voters. Decreasing the number of elections by eliminating runoffs as a benefit of Ranked Choice Voting would help. Election administrators' jobs would be easier if they only had to send out one round of ballots to voters subject to the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Since the current 45-day timeline required before a runoff can be held in Texas still isn't guaranteed to solve the delay in delivery problem, sending one ballot before the first election allows more time for voters to cast a ballot and, even if a ballot doesn't get it back in time for the first round, it still will have been returned in time for the runoff. Thank you for voting to pass this bill out of committee.

Kind Regards,
Richard Howe
Plano, Tx

Curtis Bell

self

Pearland, TX

A preferential voting system allows for better nonpartisan fair voting, and allows for people to not be forced into voting for the "lesser of two evils", and should be put into place.

Jonathan Pawlak

Self

Bryan, TX

This bill would help our fellow Americans serving overseas to express their fundamental right to vote. Preferential voting will help better define the true will of the American electorate and should be expanded to all Texans.

Christopher DuPriest
self Business Intelligence Analyst
Grapevine, TX

I am in full support of adopting a form of Ranked Choice Voting for Texas to elect their representatives and leaders. It eliminates the need for an additional runoff election and allows voters to vote honestly without fear of voting for a spoiler candidate. Please implement this bill.

James Breen
James Breen, Mechanical Engineering PE
Cypress, TX

My Republican representative Mike Schofield was recently re-elected after convincing local Libertarian party representatives to stay out of the race. Texans deserve the right to support a 3rd party candidate such as the Libertarian without having to worry about playing spoiler. Ranked Choice Voting gives voters the power to vote for the politicians they want rather than the one they think can win. Alaska did it, so can we.

Christopher Short
self, student and healthcare worker
Dallas, TX

I would like to proudly share my support for this bill because:

1. Military/overseas voters do not always receive runoff ballots in a timely manner due to delivery delays and those ballots don't necessarily get back to Texas in time to be counted. While these voters represent just 0.3% of both registered and voting Texans, this is an important group of voters who should be protected.
2. Just as others who vote early in person or by mail have experienced, military/overseas voters may vote for candidates who drop out before election day, as happened in the Democratic primary in 2020.
3. Mailing a second ballot for a runoff is expensive and the return rate is very low, which is not a good use of taxpayer money.

Benjamin Crews
Self
Grapevine, TX

An instant runoff ballot allows military voters to indicate a second or third choice in case the first choice drops out prior to election day, preventing a waste vote. The instant runoff ballot ensures that participation does not drop off between the general election and the runoff. Sending one mailing eliminates potential delay in receiving the runoff ballot in time. A single mailing also saves taxpayer dollars. This is an excellent way to make sure our fellow Texans, serving our country overseas, have their voices heard. They are important to our great state and deserve the right to properly participate in our elections.

Richard Parker
Self

Lexington, TX

Ranked choice voting should absolutely be available to our service members, as it would allow for a much more streamlined voting, and would allow Texas to save time and money compared to sending a 2nd, runoff voting ballot. In fact, Ranked Choice Voting should be allowed for EVERY Texan, whether mail-in, absentee, or in-person voting. The system allows for overall time/cost savings, and may even allow voters to be more accurate with whom they truly want to vote for.

Avni Pravin
Self - Policy Director
Irving, TX

There are a number of problems with overseas voting, including the fact that ballots are not sent out in time for overseas voters to fill out ballots and send them back. Additionally, given the short timeline, when candidates drop out of a race, there's currently no way for a voter to make a different choice and cast an impactful vote. Fortunately, there's a sensible solution that Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana have already employed. Two ballots are included in the initial mailing to each voter, but the second is only opened in the event of a runoff.

I hope that the Texas House will implement this common sense solution to encourage civic participation in our democracy and ensure our overseas voters are able to participate fully.

Tom Thomas
self
Corpus Christi, TX

Republicans, PLEASE STOP YOUR WAR AGAINST DEMOCRACY! Texas already has more voter suppression than most states; Republicans' continued attacks on voting rights are ultimately self-defeating and blatantly unAmerican.

John Sefcik
self
Fairview, TX

April 13, 2021

Re: Reject HB 740

In my opinion, if HB 740 is passed into law, it will encourage political parties to run multiple candidates with minor voter support to dilute the vote for major candidates and force a runoff election. In the runoff the second choice of the electorate is likely to be elected instead of the first choice. This subverts the intentions of Texas citizens.

I ask that you vote against HB 740 in its present form and against its provisions in committee and on the floor of the House.

John Sefcik
(972)365-4394
jds@sefcik.net
Member of the Republican Club at Heritage Ranch
www.republicanclubatheritageranch.com

Clay Gerrard
Individual Citizen
Plano, TX

HB740 would introduce Ranked Choice Voting to Texas voters and be a important enhancement to the primary voting process for our military families. Texas voters are intellegent and informed and extreamly critical of partisen ideolouges - being able to express our honest preferences on the ballot will ensure that Texas can continue to be shining example of an effective democracy for the rest of the union. I am writing to express my SUPPORT for HB740, HB117, HB2457, and ANY bill that allows for more RCV on Texas ballots!

shawn flanagan
self/retired
corpus christi, TX

Vote NO. This is worst bill the committee has seen. Based on my experience in the Libertarian Party of Texas I have seen "preferential voting" used to manipulate the vote to get the desired effect of this in control of the process. We have enough voting integrity problems without adding this fiasco to it.

Ben Brown
Self- Retired
Fairview, TX

House Elections Committee
Re: HB 740

I do not support HB 740 which establishes a preferential voting system for runoff elections.

First, am I missing something? In a runoff election, will there not be only two candidates? If so, preferential voting does not make any sense.

Otherwise, in my opinion, a preferential voting system violates the one-man, one-vote principle. As a voter I have only one vote to cast, and our voting system should compel me to vote for whomever I believe is the best candidate. If enough of my fellow Texas citizens also vote for that candidate, then that candidate deserves to be elected. A preferential voting system will force a voter to cast several votes of preference which can result in someone less than the best being elected.

Also, preferential voting will bring in another level of potential fraud as results are being counted for second, third, and other runners-up. I can only imagine the challenges that will happen under a preferential voting system and they are all bad.

I urge the Committee to vote "No" on HB740.
Yours truly,

Ben Brown
Legislative and Campaign Activities Director
Republican Club at Heritage Ranch
Fairview, Collin County TX
972-363-0620 jbenbrownpe@msn.com

Wayne Wang

self, software developer

Sugar Land, TX

Ranked Choice Voting for Military/Overseas Voters

Background: In 2018, there were approximately 45,000 registered voters in Texas who were either active military personnel, their families, or overseas residents. Both the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) in 1986 and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) which amended it in 2009 were designed to preserve the right to vote for military and overseas voters. In order to comply with these laws, the state of Texas mails ballots to these voters at least 45 days before any election.

Problem:

While Texas now fully complies with Federal ballot timeline requirements, the process is still not smooth. Being able to cover both the initial election and any potential runoff in a single mailing to UOCAVA voters would be a considerable improvement.

There are several problems with the current system:

1. Military/overseas voters do not always receive runoff ballots in a timely manner due to delivery delays and those ballots don't necessarily get back to Texas in time to be counted. While these voters represent just 0.3% of both registered and voting Texans, this is an important group of voters who should be protected.
2. Just as others who vote early in person or by mail have experienced, military/overseas voters may vote for candidates who drop out before election day, as happened in the Democratic primary in 2020.
3. Mailing a second ballot for a runoff is expensive and the return rate is very low, which is not a good use of taxpayer money.

Solution:

Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana have addressed this problem of potential disenfranchisement of military and overseas voters by adopting the use of instant runoff voting for them. Two ballots are included in the initial mailing to each voter. One is a standard ballot where a single choice for each position should be marked. The second ballot is an instant runoff ballot that allows the voter to rank their choices. Both ballots are returned in a single envelope. The second ballot is only opened in the event of a runoff. Instant runoff voting solves several problems.

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Instant runoff voting for military and overseas voters can be implemented by a legislative change to the Texas Election Code.

Clivia Baskin

self global relocation

Bedford, TX

I believe it is important to have the ballots by mail for the military and others who may not be in the state. It is legally their right to vote and why should they not be able to submit there preference and partake in their elections. I was a military brat and I know my parents voted all the time and later I did too. It is one of the things I love about America. Let's keep that love alive.

Joshua Carter

Self - Computer Programmer

Dallas, TX

Texas needs ranked choice voting for armed service members.

There's such a low chance of service members getting a runoff ballot in time, it prevents these brave people from having their vote Not Counted if their desired candidate drops out before the election, and something the conservative leaders of Texas should certainly be able to get behind... it saves taxpayer money by not having to send secondary ballots, paying for additional postage and materials. This is absolutely common sense legislation and should be approved by every member.

Sarah Cuddy

self

Houston, TX

Hello, As a citizen of Texas I believe that any incremental movement toward a Ranked Choice Voting system is a move in the right direction. HB 740 would move us in that direction and also help our military members serving over seas voices heard. In the case where a runoff election is needed, our service members may be unintentionally disenfranchised by not receiving their ballots in a timely manner. By allowing our service members who vote by mail to make a first choice, and second choice, we can make sure that they can speak equally in our electoral system. In addition, by avoided a second ballot mailing in the case of run off, we save tax payer dollars. This is a simple solution that can vastly improve our electoral process in the state of Texas.

Harriet Wasserstrum

Ranked Choice Voting for Texas

Bellaire, TX

I learned about ranked choice voting (RCV) two years ago and was attracted to it as a way to save taxpayer and candidate costs; to decrease negative campaigning as candidates try to attract second and third choice votes so focus more on issues than on the nasty things they can say about their opponents; and to ensure that winners gain majority support.

I later learned that five Southern states adopted RCV (instant runoff voting) as a way to ensure that military and overseas (UOCAVA) voters fully participate in runoff elections. Their clever solution: two ballots are included in the initial mailing to each voter. One is a standard ballot where a single choice for each position should be marked. The second ballot is an instant runoff ballot that allows each voter to rank their choices. Both ballots are returned in a single envelope. The second ballot is only opened in the event of a runoff. Based on how each voter ranked the candidates, the preferred candidate in the runoff can be determined

I co-founded Ranked Choice Voting for Texas at the end of 2019. We have begun to educate voters about the benefits of RCV; it is not complicated but does take some upfront education. Where it has been implemented, a great majority of voters find it easy to use and would like to continue to use it. It has been adopted in both red and blue states for various types of elections.

HB740 would replicate the process already used by Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Current military personnel and veterans I have spoken with are frustrated with the current election process and view this change as an improvement.

Chris Whitmire, the Director of Public Information at the South Carolina State Election Commission, wrote that since their instant runoff ballot is only used for military and overseas voters and not every election results in a runoff, they only have data on a small subset of the voting population. However, he said "I don't have numbers to back this up, but it has allowed many military and overseas voters the chance to vote in runoffs that otherwise may have been difficult or impossible, and it has also saved election officials the expense of a second mailing for those voters wishing to receive their ballot by mail."

I hope that the House Committee on Elections acts favorably on this bill and that it is ultimately signed into law. HB740 would:

1. Ensure that our military voters are not disenfranchised by delays in getting ballots for runoff elections or by voting for candidates who drop out before election day;

2. Ensure that participation does not drop off between the general election and a runoff;
3. Reduce election expenses; and
4. Provide an opportunity to test RCV in Texas.

Ranked choice voting is a nonpartisan change in voting logistics. HB740's limited application of RCV to military and overseas voters would not avail Texas of all its benefits but would be a considerable improvement for UOCAVA voters.

Charles Wiley

self

Alice, TX

Please Vote no! Not only is this bill confusing, but why would we allow a voter to have a written ballot for both the general election and the runoff at the same time? Lots can happen between one and the other...a candidate's reputation could change, affecting a voter's opinion of the candidate. That has happened in many races in Texas, causing dishonest candidates taking office.

Richard Smith

Self

Corpus christi, TX

No, no, no, no

Kathryn Gordon

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

No

Ryan Rynbrandt, Professor

self / educator

Dallas, TX

Dear Chairman Cain and distinguished members of the House Committee on Elections,

As a college professor who has worked with many veterans in my over 14 years as an educator, I enthusiastically support HB 740. This bill simplifies and improves the process of voting for our men and women in uniform, particularly those serving overseas. Currently, these voters often fail to receive runoff ballots in a timely manner and as a result often do not get their ballots submitted in time to be counted. In addition, the mailing of runoff ballots is an unnecessary expense that could be eliminated by providing such voters a ranked choice ballot. There are tens of thousands of registered voters in Texas who are either active military personnel, their families, or overseas residents. Adopting RCV for them ensures that their voices will be heard in the electoral process. This bill will save the state money as well, by improving the efficiency of voting. Five states have adopted such an approach, and I encourage the state of Texas to follow their lead.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Ryan Rynbrandt
Professor of Political Science

Collin College

Larry Ringler

Self

Portland, TX

Vote NO. This bill not only is confusing, but there's no reason to let a voter have a written ballot for the general election and runoff election at the same time. Much can happen between those two events that can affect the voter's opinion of the candidate, and lead to untrustworthy candidates taking office.

Jessie Carlson

self

Corpus Chrsiti, TX

Vote no! This bill is confusing, but why would we allow a voter to have a written ballot for both the general election and the runoff at the same time? A candidate's reputation could change, affecting a voter's opinion of the candidate. That has happened in many races in Texas.

Amanda Friedeck, Mrs.

Silver Star Food Stores/BRANDS Marketing Group, LLC

ALICE, TX

I, Amanda Sue Friedeck (Jim Wells County) am in favor of HB 740. This is so that our elections are transparent, accountable and fair.

Victor Maestas

Self / Graphic Designer

Austin, TX

Our current election/runoff process is a total mess-- especially for overseas voters. I support any measure to increase voter turnout and franchise by streamlining our process to make things easier for everyone. Overseas military may become disenfranchised in a number of ways. They may not receive runoff ballots in a timely manner and/or they may vote early for candidates who drop out with no second or third choice to take their place. Additionally, mailing a second ballot seems expensive, complicates the process, and I'd wager my bets that it has a very low return rate. Not supporting Ranked Choice Voting is a poor use of taxpayer money and, more importantly, undemocratic.

Sarah Styf

Self/teacher

Spring, TX

As we work to make our elections more equitable and a better representation of the will of the people, I ask that please bring this bill to the house floor for a vote, allowing a select number of Texans to test RCV and show that it can work for most or all of our elections. RCV allows voters to select who they believe is best for an elected position without fearing that their vote will be wasted or spoil the overall results of the election. It has also been shown in multiple cases to make for more civil election cycles

and to save a significant amount of money.

Azaam Jamil

Self

The Woodlands, TX

Background: In 2018, there were approximately 45,000 registered voters in Texas who were either active military personnel, their families, or overseas residents. Both the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) in 1986 and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) which amended it in 2009 were designed to preserve the right to vote for military and overseas voters. In order to comply with these laws, the state of Texas mails ballots to these voters at least 45 days before any election.

Problem: While Texas now fully complies with Federal ballot timeline requirements, the process is still not smooth. Being able to cover both the initial election and any potential runoff in a single mailing to UOCAVA voters would be a considerable improvement.

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Solution: Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana have addressed this problem of potential disenfranchisement of military and overseas voters by adopting the use of instant runoff voting for them. Two ballots are included in the initial mailing to each voter. One is a standard ballot where a single choice for each position should be marked. The second ballot is an instant runoff ballot that allows the voter to rank their choices. Both ballots are returned in a single envelope. The second ballot is only opened in the event of a runoff. Instant runoff voting solves several problems.

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Instant runoff voting for military and overseas voters can be implemented by a legislative change to the Texas Election Code.

Sarah Tavana, 75013

self, student

Allen, TX

Runoff ballots seem like a straightforward way to make sure the votes of overseas voters count, regardless of what changes by the time their ballots arrive. I am commenting to voice my support for the bill.

Kimberly Bridges Young

Self

Crp Christi, TX

Vote no!

Denise Gordon

TX Democratic Veterans

Round Rock, TX

Pass this HB 740! Having Voted by Absentee Voting while on duty Overseas, this Bill would help Service Members cast ballots that would be counted when there are runoffs. When serving overseas, when we take the time to research an election, this Bill would permit Service Members to vote if there is a runoff. Service Members may not have time to research or even be aware of runoffs if serving in a Combat Zone.

Pass HB740!

Elizabeth Miller

Self, disabled attorney

Bedford, TX

Please make it more possible for servicemembers and others to make their true electoral choice reflected by their votes.

Kathryn Williams

Self/retired

Austin, TX

Support -- with reservations that it might cause confusion on the part of the voter.
